

Nebraska Library Commission

The Atrium • 1200 N St. • Suite 120 • Lincoln NE 68508-2023 • 402-471-2045 • Fax 402-471-2083 • nlc.nebraska.gov



April 21, 2014

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: **Modernizing the E-rate Program for Schools and Libraries WC Docket No. 13-184**

Dear Secretary Dortch:

The E-rate Program provides critical support for digital learning and public access to online information through Nebraska's 268 public libraries. The Nebraska Library Commission (Nebraska's state library administrative agency) supports the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) efforts to update the program and supports the American Library Association's (ALA) proposal to advance cost-efficient library network development via technical support enabled by state library agencies. We further support the ALA's proposals to upgrade library broadband capacity via school-library wide area network partnerships and deployment of technologies at affordable costs.

State library agencies provide a critical link between federal policies and local public libraries, many of which have limited information technology (IT) staff available to support network planning and broadband procurement. Nebraska libraries are largely on their own for most technology support needs.

The ALA's demonstration project offers multiple benefits including:

- increase knowledge at both the local and state level of barriers to high-capacity broadband to and within library buildings;
- allow the Nebraska Library Commission to assess circumstances of the state's libraries of different sizes to identify common concerns, bulk purchasing opportunities and other interventions;
- increase local library participation in the E-rate program and/or improve purchasing decisions through the E-rate program; and
- provide evaluation of interventions to better inform future action by the Commission or other entities supporting local library technology.

Marlene H. Dortch
April 21, 2014

This two-year demonstration will directly support library E-rate applicants in the near-term, as well as increase opportunities for developing state, regional and national solutions over the longer term.

The Nebraska Library Commission's recently completed three-year Broadband Technology Opportunity Program grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, resulted in significant broadband service improvement for a third of Nebraska's public libraries. That success contrasts with the need to assist many additional Nebraska public libraries. With experience from the BTOP project, Nebraska is well positioned to assist many more libraries in upgrading broadband infrastructure and service.

Nebraska libraries have experienced steady growth in services supported by broadband technologies. However, there is considerable work to be done in order to provide the capacity needed for libraries to meet and sustain adequate broadband service.

Thousands of Nebraskans depend on their public libraries daily for personal, employment, educational and other needs through use of their library's public access computers. The E-rate program continues to be vital toward assuring that people are not denied opportunities for lack of access to digital networks.

The Nebraska Library Commission and Nebraska libraries look forward to contributing toward Universal Service goals through a future-focused E-rate 2.0.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your consideration of our recommendations.

Sincerely,



Rod Wagner
Director